MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

MARVEL

MIDNIGHT SONS

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

EARLY JAN

145

GHOST RIDER

SIEGE OF DARKNESS PART II

T.HARPER

A TORX SCAN

MARVEL READERS PRESENT

c/o Marvel Comics Group
387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016
Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your name and address though we will withhold that info by request!

Dear Richard and Michael,

In the interest of variety, I'll take up John Panno's suggestion and write a different type of letter other than the usual "report card". First, I will say that MCP #140 was very good, and I would have given all of the stories anywhere from a B+ to an A+ as the grades. Now, on with the show, ahem, letter:

First off, I'd like to keep the flip-book format. However, if you really want to lose it, I won't mind that much. Second, I'm glad you are planning to gradually phase out Wolverine from this title. He's been in this title for the past 100 issues, which is quite enough. Keeping Ghost Rider on a regular basis sounds good. However, I hope his stories are well done. Some of his stories in the past year (the team-ups with Iron Fist and Cage) have ranged from not very good to complete disasters. I hope his future material will be much better than some of his past stories.

Perhaps it'd be a good idea to get rid of the one-shot stories for a few months, and replace them with two-part stories. Quite often, eight pages isn't enough to develop a story. See how this idea goes, and then proceed from there. As for the other three features; I'd like to see various lengths for the stories. It'd be good to have an eight-parter, and a four-parter running simultaneously. Or, try a ten-part story along with two six-parters. You get the idea.

Have a variety of characters, both well-known and not so well-known. Try not to have excessive use of characters who have their own books, appear frequently in MCP or both. In other words, let's see less of the Thing, Spider-Man, Speedball, Hulk, Iron Man, Namor and Silver Surfer. They've all appeared in MCP quite often.

Also, whatever you guys do, no more Iron Fist! I'm getting sick of this guy. The last few months in MCP have been Wolvie, Ghost Rider, Iron Fist, and some other character. Kinda defeats the purpose of an anthology book, doesn't it? I do want to see him in his own book where he can be properly handled, instead of in a series of unconnected one-shots. I hope his book comes out soon.

Before I go, I'd like to say thanks to Richard Ashford. I met him yesterday at Alternate Realities, along with Larry Hama, Ron Garney, and Stan Lee. Mr. Ashford was nice enough to tell me his plans for the book. He thanked me for writing to this book in the past, and I thanked him for printing a couple of those letters. All in all, we talked for quite a while. He seemed like a really nice guy, and I'd like to thank him for his time. Good luck on MCP and EXCALIBUR, Mr. Ashford, and keep up the good work.

Ben Herman
45 Runyon Place
Scarsdale, NY 10583

Thanks, Ben! Richard really enjoyed getting out and meeting some of our readers as part of "MARVEL MEGA TOUR '93". For those among you who may not have already heard, Marvel Comics Presents editor Richard Ashford takes on the writing chores of the mutant-team book EXCALIBUR, starting with Issue # 72.

Dear Marvel Readers Present,

How can you be unable to use Bullseye because he's dead, but you can use Elektra, who died at the same time Bullseye did, in the Elektra graphic novel?

Chris Connelly
7008 Appoline
Dearburn, MI 48126

Hey, Chris, that's comics. Didn't you hear she came back to life? Anyway maybe we jumped the gun. Bullseye could come back someday..

A TORX SCAN

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

GHOST RIDER

Fred Harper — COVER
Richard Ashford — EDITOR
Michael Kraiger — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

pg.

GHOST RIDER 1

SIEGE OF DARKNESS
Part 11
"SPEAKEASY"

Caretaker has been captured, and is being tortured by Zarathos and the Fallen. Near death there is but one way to get a message through to Ghost Rider ... the way of the dead!

Writer — CHRIS COOPER
Breakdowns — REGGIE JONES
Finishes — FRED HARPER
Letterer — UL HIGGINS
Colorist — JOE ANDREANI

pg.

NIGHTSTALKERS 9

SIEGE OF DARKNESS
Part 11
"DUST"
PART 1 OF 2

In the quiet half-ruined catacombs beneath Cypress Hills Cemetery, a place the Blood known as Caretaker called home, NIGHTSTALKER Frank Drake comes face to face with the People of the Dust!

Writer — STEVEN GRANT
Artist — LAWRENCE BROWN
Letterer — UL HIGGINS
Colors — CHRISTIE SCHEELE

Look for the next terrorizing part of the SIEGE OF DARKNESS [part 12] in Darkhold #16 and return in two weeks to read part 14 in MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #146!

CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY, BROOKLYN -- THE LAIR OF THE DEMON **ZARATHOS** AND HIS FOLLOWERS, THE **FALLEN**.

SPEAKEASY

HEAR ME, MY FELLOW FALLEN! HEED THE WORDS OF *PATRIARCH*!

BY THE COMMAND OF OUR LORD, *ZARATHOS*--

--OUR DESPICABLE BRETHREN, THE *BLOOD*, WILL JOIN OUR CAUSE OR *DIE*!!

GHOST RIDER AND THE MIDNIGHT SONS WHO DARED OPPOSE US HAVE PROVEN UTTERLY POWERLESS!

BUT THE BLOOD--! THEY HIDE AMONG THE HUMAN CATTLE, LIVING WITH THEM...

...INSTEAD OF RULING OVER THEM AS WE WILL SOON DO!

SHOULD THEY CHOOSE TO STAND AGAINST US, LIKE OUR CAPTIVE HERE, CARETAKER--

THAT IS A RISK WE CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE.

AND THE GREATEST RISK IS POSED BY THOSE CALLED RAYDAR AND TRUTHSAYER! IS THAT NOT SO, MY LORD ZARATHOS?

RAYDAR... TRUTH-SAYER...

...PLAYERS IN AN ANCIENT WAR I BARELY REMEMBER.

DO WHAT YOU WILL, PATRIARCH. YOU AND THE OTHER FALLEN--INDEED, ALL THE BEINGS OF THIS WORLD--

--ARE BUT PAWNS IN A LARGER GAME... A GAME OF MY CHOOSING!

HIS LORDSHIP HAS SPOKEN!

OUR OLD ENEMIES WILL LEARN A NEW WAY--OUR WAY--

--OR THEY WILL LEARN THE WAYS OF THE DEAD!

NOT IF I CAN HELP IT!

THANKS TO HANNIBAL KING, I MANAGED TO TELL GHOST RIDER TO PROTECT THE BLOOD...

...NOW I JUST NEED TO TELL HIM WHICH BLOOD TO PROTECT! BUT HOW? UNLESS...

...THE WAYS OF THE DEAD"! THAT'S IT!

PROVIDED THAT SERVANT OF STYGE AND CENTURIOUS HASN'T GOTTEN HIMSELF KILLED--AGAIN!

YOU'RE PITIFUL, ZARATHOS, YOU KNOW THAT?

YOU I REMEMBER CLEARLY!

PERHAPS IF YOU WHIMPER, CARETAKER... IF YOU GROVEL AND BEG... I'LL PERMIT YOU TO JOIN OUR HOLY CAUSE!

WHAT DO YOU SAY TO THAT?

PT

NOW DARE YOU?!

OLD MAN, THERE IS NO POWER THAT CAN SAVE YOU FROM ME!

NO POWER AT ALL!

YEEARGH!

HE'S DEAD! DEAD, DEAD DEAD!!!

IS HE, PATRIARCH?

JUST ABOUT. IT'S A MATTER OF SECONDS, NOW.

A PITY. I MUST LEARN TO CONTROL MY TEMPER.

FAREWELL, CARETAKER.

YOUR SUFFERING WOULD HAVE BEEN EXQUISITE.

THE NIGHTCLUB, STRONGHOLD OF THE BLOOD...

YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE COME HERE, STACY. I DON'T WANT YOU INVOLVED IN THIS.

I'M ALREADY INVOLVED, GHOST RIDER-- INVOLVED WITH DAN, INVOLVED WITH YOU!

I DON'T UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING I'VE SEEN...BUT I NEED TO!

AND I NEED YOU TO HELP ME DO IT!

BUT I... I FEAR FOR YOUR SAFETY.

C'MON, GHOST RIDER, THIS IS COMMAND CENTRAL FOR THOSE BLOOD PEOPLE! WHAT COULD BE...

...SAFER...?

THE MIRROR? SOMEONE IS USING ONE OF THE MYSTIC PORTALS TO ENTER THIS PLACE! BUT WHO...?

Aaiieeee! Death, Death, Death!

SPEAKEASY!

Screaming! Tearing! Want Out, Want Out!

WHO?

A ZOMBIE RESURRECTED BY MY ENEMY STYGE*...

...HE'S TRAPPED BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH!

*IN DARKHOLD #5.--Richard

DOWN, STACY!

I'D THOUGHT HIM DESTROYED.. BUT SOMEONE HAS SENT HIM TO DESTROY US!

NONE OF THE BLOOD KNOW HOW TO GAIN ACCESS TO THIS PLACE! HOW DID SPEAKEASY--?

I DON'T KNOW; BUT HE'S BERSERK! HE'S TEARING EVERYTHING APART AND HEADING FOR US!

THEN HE'LL COME NO FURTHER!

THWOK

Ghaaaaaah!

WHAT--?!

Ghaaaa Ghaaghk!

HE'S NEVER BEEN THIS STRONG! RUN, STACY, R--

UNNF!

Aaaaaaaah!

Y-YOU WANT ME, YOU WALKING CADAVER?

SMITH & WESSON

COME AND GET ME!!

BLAM BLAM

Hurrgh!

BLAM

BLAM

BLAM

THAT'S THAT!

GOOD TO KNOW THAT, GHOUL OR NO GHOUL...

...A FEW WELL-PLACED BULLETS CAN STILL STOP 'EM DEAD IN THEIR TRACKS!

TCHINK

NO!

Uuurhk!

MY SMOKING BONES WILL ROT BEFORE YOU'LL LAY HANDS ON HER!

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT HER--

--OR WHY YOU'RE ATTACKING NOW?

BUT MY PENANCE STARE WILL PUT A STOP TO THIS MADNESS!

NORMALLY, IT WOULD.

NORMALLY, THE PENANCE STARE SENDS THE GUILTY INTO PARALYZED AGONY.

BUT, SURPRISINGLY, FOR SPEAKEASY IT HAS A CALMING EFFECT.

ALLOWING HIM TO PULL HIMSELF TOGETHER.

POP

There. That's Better.

Aaaaah!

Thanks. Your Penance Stare Drove Away The Screams Of The Dead That Were Driving Me Berserk.

Or Had You Forgotten That I Can Speak To The Dead?

Which Is Why I'm Here-- Not To Hurt You, But To Deliver A Message.

Caretaker-- He Told Me How To Get Here-- Wants You To Know Which Blood Are In Danger. He Was Very Insistent.

TELL ME YOUR MESSAGE. BUT...

...IF CARETAKER MENTALLY CONTACTED YOU, THAT MEANS THAT HE'S...

...DEAD?

NOT QUITE...

...THOUGH YOU HAD US GOING THERE FOR AWHILE, OLD MAN...

TAKE HEED--ANY FURTHER INSOLENCE MAY INDEED COST YOU YOUR MISERABLE LIFE!

AND IT WOULD BE A PITY TO CUT YOUR TORMENT SHORT!

BAH! ENOUGH OF OUR IMPOTENT CAPTIVE!

TIME WE TURNED OUR ATTENTION TO RAYDAR AND TRUTHSAYER!

THAT WAS TOO CLOSE!

I ALMOST DIDN'T MAKE IT BACK FROM MY SHORT TASTE OF DEATH-- I DON'T DARE TRY THAT AGAIN!

NOW THAT GHOST RIDER HAS GOTTEN THE MESSAGE, HE AND THE OTHER MIDNIGHT SONS ARE ON THEIR OWN...

...AND ARE THE WORLD'S ONLY HOPE!

THE SIEGE CONTINUES IN DARKHOLD #16!!

NIGHTSTALKERS

DUST

CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY, QUEENS, NEW YORK.

THEIR ENEMIES IN DISARRAY, THE DEMON NAMED **ZARATHOS** AND HIS FOLLOWERS DANCE ON THE GRAVE OF THE WORLD.*

SEE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #18.--Richard

THE CATACOMBS BENEATH LIE QUIET, HALF-RUINED IN BATTLE.*

ONLY THE WHISTLE OF THE WIND DISTURBS THE DESERTED MAZE OF HALLS, AND THE INFREQUENT SKITTER OF RATS--

IN NIGHTSTALKERS # 14, NOW ON SALE. --Richard Again

--AND THE NIGHTSTALKER NAMED **FRANK DRAKE**...

NO SIGN OF ANYONE. GOOD.

WITH A **BROKEN LEG**, I'M JUST ANOTHER **BUG** FOR THE FALLEN TO SQUASH IF THEY CATCH ME... CAN'T EVEN **MANEUVER**...

AND I HAVEN'T GOT MUCH IN THE LINE OF **DEFENSES**, POOR **LINDA**.

BLADE **TOLD** ME NOT TO GET EMOTIONALLY ATTACHED TO MY WEAPONS..

...AND IT **IS** ONLY A **GUN** AFTER ALL...

POWER CELLS ARE SALVAGEABLE... SOME OF THE NANO-GENERATOR CHIPS...

MEMORY CHIPS ARE INTACT, TOO, BUT THEY CAN **STAY** IN THE EXORCIST...

THEY'LL BE **SAFER** THERE... CAN'T USE THEM NOW **ANYWAY**...

...AND **FIREPOWER** WILL GET YOU THROUGH TIMES OF NO DATA BETTER THAN **DATA** WILL GET YOU THROUGH TIMES OF NO FIREPOWER...

CREEPY PLACE... WONDER HOW CARETAKER STOOD LIVING HERE?

EASY FOR MOST PEOPLE TO FORGET HE'S NOT HUMAN... BUT I'M NO STRANGER TO MONSTERS IN HUMAN FORM...

HE'S SUPERNATURAL, THAT'S SURE -- AND THE NIGHTSTALKERS WOULD HAVE HAD TO FINISH HIM SOONER OR LATER... IF HE'S OCCULT, HE'S OUR ENEMY...

BETTER IT HAD BEEN US THAN ZARATHOS AND THE FALLEN, THOUGH...

WHAT ON EARTH DID HE USE THIS PLACE FOR?!

FLESH!

FRANK!

BLADE!

KING!

WHO'S THERE?!

FREE!

RISE, PEOPLE OF THE DUST!

TO DUST WE RETURNED, FROM DUST WE COME AGAIN!

HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN?

EONS! FEEL THE EARTH--THE EARTH HAS CHANGED! GROWN COLD TWICE AND WARMED AGAIN!

WHERE'S THE CARE-TAKER? IF HE FINDS US?

FINDS US? HOW?! HE MUST BE DEAD, HIS POWER BROKEN, OR WE WOULD NOT BE LOOSED!

WE DO NOT COWER AND SHIVER IN THE DARK! WE ARE FIRST MEN, BORN OF THE EARTH!

"IN TIME PAST REMEMBERING WE WERE BORN FROM THE DUST TO SHAPE THE WORLD TO OUR WILL!"

"THAT IS OUR BIRTHRIGHT THAT IS OUR CAUSE!

"WE WATCHED THE *LIZARDS* RISE AND FALL! *CONTINENTS* SHIFTED! RACES *LIVED*, RACES *DIED*--AND *NONE* WAS A CHALLENGE TO US!

"THE *APE-FLESH* WERE NO CHALLENGE TO US!

"YET THEIR FLESH WAS A *DELICACY*, THEIR PAINED SCREAMS THE *RAREST* MUSIC...

"...COARSE SAVAGES STRUGGLING TOWARD *INTELLIGENCE*, TOO BRAINLESS TO KNOW THEY WERE *PETS* AND *LIVESTOCK*!

"THEY COULD *NOT* CHALLENGE US!

"HAD NOT THE *BLOOD* MERGED THEIR POWERS... HAD NOT THE *CARE-TAKER*... HAD *NOT*..."

BUT THE CARETAKER IS *DEAD*, OR *RUINED*,

WE ARE *FREE* AND THE FLESH HAVE NO PROTECTORS...

THINK *AGAIN*. THINGS HAVE *CHANGED*--WE MIGHT BE TOUGHER THAN YOU *REMEMBER*--

FLESH?! HERE? SUCH STRANGE FLESH...

SORRY. THOUGHT YOU WERE TALKING TO ME...

FLESH!

YOU'LL FORGIVE ME IF I DON'T LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT--

--AND WE'RE A BIT BETTER ARMED THAN "COARSE SAVAGES"--

--BUT NOT MUCH... MY EYEPIECE CAN PUT OUT SOME JUICE BUT IT GOES NOWHERE NEAR "LINDA'S" POWER...

...SO THIS ISN'T THE BEST TIME FOR A FIRM STAND...

YOU ARE DEAD, FLESH! MEAT FOR OUR MEAL!

BELIEVE ME THE THOUGHT'S CROSSED MY MIND!

NO WAY I'LL *OUTRUN* THEM, NOT IN *MY* CONDITION.

CATACOMBS TWIST ENOUGH THEY'RE MY BEST BET TO *LOSE* THEM, IF I CAN GET

OW!

I CLAIM THIS *KILL!* I CLAIM THIS *MEAT!*

WAK

GUESS *AGAIN!*

I'VE HAD CREATURES WHO'D SCARE *YOU* TRY TO PUT THE *BITE* ON ME--

--AND IT HASN'T HAPPENED *YET!*

WORDS... YOU WERE PRESERVED FOR *OUR* PLEASURES... TO SATE OUR *APPETITES...*

NO!

YOU HEARD THE MAN!

HE SAID NO!

MORE FLESH?!

MORE TEETH!

BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU. FRANKLY, KING'S OFF TO FIND THE OTHERS, TONS HAPPENING TOPSIDE.

MEANS IT'S JUST YOU AND ME-- AND LOTS OF THEM. WHAT ARE THESE THINGS?

YOUR GUESS'S AS GOOD AS MINE THEY WALKED OUT OF THE WALLS.

KILL THEM! KILL THEM!

YOU SPENT YOUR TIME DOWN HERE TEACHING THESE SUCKERS ENGLISH?!

HEY, THEY SHOWED UP THAT WAY.

MAN, I HATE THE OCCULT...

NEXT: ASHES!

MARVEL

MIDNIGHT SONS

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

EARLY JAN

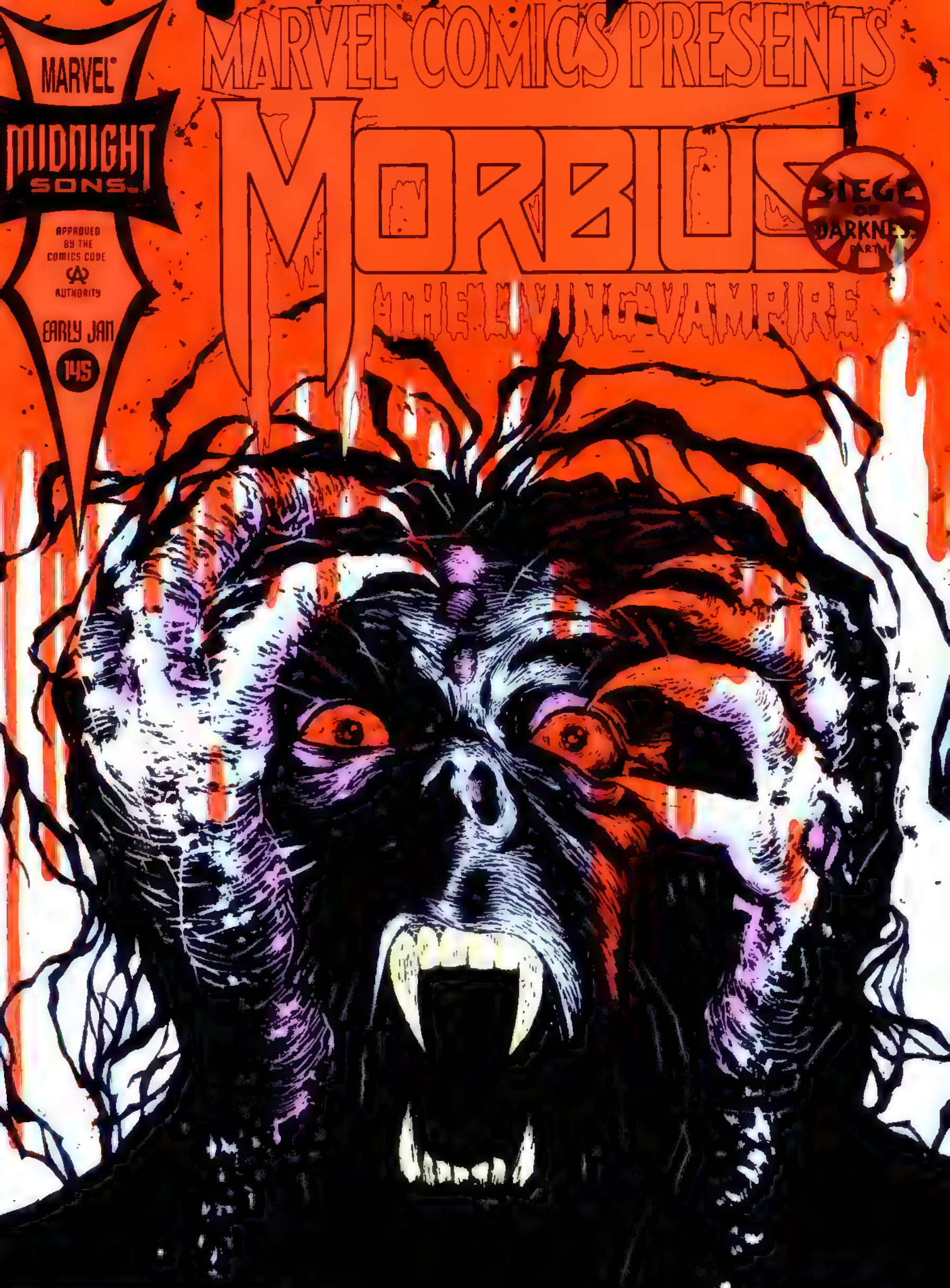
145

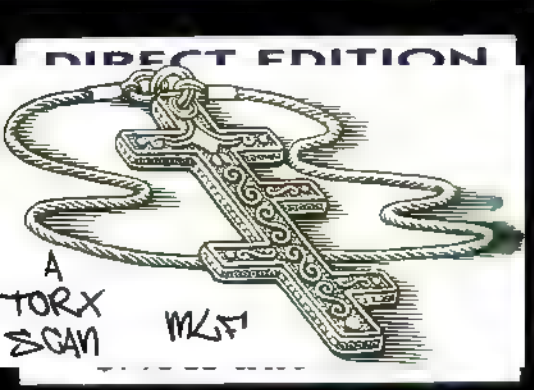
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS

MORBIUS

THE LIVING VAMPIRE

SIEGE OF DARKNESS PART I





MORBIUS
THE LIVING VAMPIRE

Steve Lightle — COVER
Richard Ashford — EDITOR
Michael Kraiger — ASSISTANT EDITOR
Tom DeFalco — EDITOR IN CHIEF

MORBIUS..... pg. 1
SIEGE OF DARKNESS
PART 11
"CASUALTIES OF WAR"
PART 2 OF 2

With the Lilin presence still locked within his subconscious, Morbius must prove his loyalty as well as his humanity to a member of the NIGHT-STALKERS who would see him as otherwise!

Writer — GREG WRIGHT
Penciler — M.C.WYMAN
Inker — MALCOM JONES III
Letterer — UL HIGGINS
Colorist — FREDDY MENDEZ

DARKHOLD ..... pg. 9
SIEGE OF DARKNESS
Part 11
"WHITE LETTER"

A letter to Doctor Strange, written by the late Prof. Louise Hastings and opened and read by Vicki Montesi, a letter that goes a long way in explaining the evil written on the pages of the Book of Sins!

Writer — CHRIS COOPER
Layouts — REGGIE JONES
Finishes — REY GARCIA
Letterer — UL HIGGINS
Colorist — JOE ANDREANI

MARVEL® COMICS PRESENTS™ Vol. 1, No. 145, Early January, 1994. (ISSN #1044-7180) Published by MARVEL COMICS. Terry Stewart, President. Stan Lee, Publisher. Michael Hobson, Group Vice President, Publishing. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published biweekly.

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MARVEL READERS' PRESENT

c/o Marvel Comics Group
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Attention Correspondents: All letters to be considered for publication must include your name and address though we will withhold that info by request!

Dear Richard and Michael,

Its clear that every good debate has two sides. And it was really interesting to see John Panno write off the MCP letter pages of the past as "inane and boring". While I love a good argument, that would be futile. Please allow me to mention, though, that A) many of the things John mentioned have previously been talked about by letter contributors like myself, and B) reading other peoples opinions is always a fun experience. After all, if every letter were like John's, you wouldn't know when individual creators were doing something right or wrong. On to #140...

1) Wolverine: Despite some consistently nice artwork, "Rumble in the Jungle" has fallen flat in terms of story. Its not awful, but is for the most part relying on old cliches to tell the story. Four parts would have been sufficient for this tale, right? Either way, its great to see Chris Marrinan develop as a writer. I wouldn't say that "the excitement is gone", since every arc can't be a "Weapon-X" or "Wolverine/Nightcrawler", and I wouldn't vote to drop Wolverine. Just concentrate on more poignant and important stories. Overall grade: B-.

2) Spellbound: Highlighted by the work of new penciler Sergio Cariello, this story remains fun, although the characters have remained an enigma to readers without previous exposure. Bobbie Chase's story is interesting, and I'd like to see the Spellbinders' return occur maybe as part of the Midnight Sons group. This team has the potential for not only good adventure (as displayed here) but also for darker appearances, as their supernatural overtones prove. Again, Sergio and Scott did a great job, as did colorist Carl Gafford. Overall grade: A.

3) Ghost Rider: The Masters of Silence continue to be mismatched foes for Ghost Rider, but Len Kaminski is doing his remarkable best to try and tie this whole thing together. Reggie and Fred continue to do nice art, and I'd recommend that they have a chance on the monthly title where more readers can get akin to their style. As for Len's story, it's interesting if not that wonderful. Hopefully, the Midnight Sons crossover issue will give Ghostie plenty of talent to handle him and tie it into his present-day adventures outside of MCP. See, John, MCP's already integrating this title more carefully. Overall grade: B.

4) Iron Fist: With Jae and J.M.'s book on hold, I guess MCP is becoming the K'un-L'un Kid's permanent home. If this is true, I'd like you to start seriously advancing Danny Rand's character. John Figueroa's script to "End Run" was typical of an eight-page filler, and while a good story if judged on that alone, it was boring in the larger scope of things. Ron Wilson did another smash art job, and it amazes me that he's not doing a regular title again. (Bring Ron back to the Thing, FF fans!) And how about shaking up things and giving the back-up characters covers every once in a while? Overall grade: A-.

Thanks for your time as well as continual attention to readers who want critiques as well as advisement! I agree with a lot of what John said, but if everyone focused an entire letter on things like that, people'd run out of things to say. And you can't comply with everybody, so I'll stick to the tried-and-true. Thanks for the support.

Joey Marchese
P.O. Box 2197
Union, NJ 07083-2197

And thanks for your continued support, Joey. Keep watching as further changes come to the pages of MCP.

A TORX SCAN

IT IS A PLACE NOT UNLIKE MOST BARS OR NIGHTCLUBS.

BUT THIS **PARTICULAR** CLUB IS A KIND OF **SUPERNATURAL JUNCTION** WITH DOORS THAT LEAD EVERYWHERE AND NOWHERE.

IT IS HERE WHERE MICHAEL MORBIUS ATTEMPTS WITHOUT SUCCESS TO FORGET ALL THE **PAIN** HE HAS WROUGHT.

AN EVIL LILIN PRESENCE WHICH STILL REMAINS IN HIS SUBCONSCIOUSNESS TEMPORARILY TOOK CONTROL OF HIS FORM AND MURDERED PROFESSOR LOUISE HASTINGS.

IT THEN LED THE LILIN, LILITH AND THE MIGHTY ZARATHOS RIGHT TO DOCTOR STRANGE'S SANCTUM SANCTORUM WHERE MORBIUS'S ALLIES WERE NEARLY DESTROYED AND THE MANSION ITSELF OBLITERATED.

I AM NOT **SURPRISED** NONE WISH TO ACCOMPANY ME...

IT IS **THESE** ACTIONS WHICH HE WAS NOT **STRONG** ENOUGH TO PREVENT, WHICH LED TO THE RISING OF THE **FALLEN**, ZARATHOS'S MINIONS.

THEY PLAN TO DESTROY WHAT REMAINS OF THE RACE KNOWN AS THE **BLOOD**, WHO ARE ALL THAT STAND IN THE WAY OF THE CONQUEST OF EARTH.

THOUGH THE LILIN PRESENCE WHICH CAUSED SO MUCH TURMOIL IS BURIED **DEEP** WITHIN HIS SUBCONSCIOUSNESS, MORBIUS FEELS NONETHELESS **RESPONSIBLE**...

SIEGE OF DARKNESS CHAPTER #11

CASUALTIES OF WAR

I HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO LOCATE THE *BLOOD* KNOWN AS JAMES RAYDAR, BEFORE THE FALLEN DO.

THERE IS A FLASH OF ENERGY AND A SLIGHT WHIFF OF BRIMSTONE AS MORBIUS ENTERS AN ORDINARY LOOKING DOOR ONLY TO FIND HIMSELF IN AN INTERDIMENSIONAL CORRIDOR THAT WILL TAKE HIM MANY MILES WITHIN A SCANT FEW SECONDS.

THE BLOOD MUST HAVE BEEN A *POWERFUL* RACE TO HAVE DEFEATED ZARATHOS ONCE BEFORE.

IT'S ABOUT *TIME* YOU GOT MOVING, MORBIUS.

I *DETEST* HIDING IN THIS *MIST-LIKE* FORM...

EXIT

I CANNOT GET USED TO THESE "DOORWAYS".

SNFF THAT SCENT--

--FAMILIAR...

A CHILD...

...BLEEDING HEAVILY--

YOU'RE LILIN!

TH-TH-THEY'RE ALL G-G-G-GONE.

ARE Y-Y-YOU GONNA KILL *ME* TOO?

I D-DON'T WANT T-T-TO *DIE!* I DIDN'T WANT ANYTHING T-T-TO D-D-DO WITH MOTHER LILITH'S WAR!

I W-WAS HAPPY WITHIN THE *MIST!*

*INSIDE MORBIUS'S SUBCONSCIOUSNESS, THE LILIN PRESENCE SCREAMS IN RAGE OVER THE TRAITOROUS CHILD'S WORDS. IT **DESERVES** TO BE SLAUGHTERED FOR SUCH TALK.*

FEELING A *KINSHIP*, MORBIUS?

HANNIBAL KING!

YOU FOLLOWED ME?

YOU BETRAYED US ONCE. THAT WARRANTS US WATCHING YOU UNDER A MAGNIFYING GLASS.

GIVE ME THE LILIN CHILD. IT HAS TO DIE LIKE THE OTHERS.

NO!

SHE IS NO THREAT, JUST AN INNOCENT CASUALTY!

SHE'S LILIN. SHE DIES, OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHO THE ENEMY IS?

I THOUGHT WE WERE PRESERVING LIVES OF THE INNOCENT.

I AM REVOLTED BY DEATH OF ANY KIND DESPITE MY NEED FOR HUMAN BLOOD.

YOU YOURSELF CANNOT BEAR THE THOUGHT OF YOUR OWN VAMPIRIC TENDENCIES. THE SAME CAN BE SAID ABOUT MANY OF THE LILIN--

THAT'S A LOAD OF BULL--

HUHHHHH!

NO! SHE IS DYING!

THIS ONE HAS COMMITTED NO SINS SAVE FOR BEING BORN NTO A RACE WE HAVE CONDEMNED AS ABSOLUTE EVIL!

BREATHE!

YOU CAN LIVE, LITTLE ONE!

LET HER DIE! THE HUMAN LIVES THAT WERE LOST WHILE THE LILIN RAN RAMPANT THROUGH OUR WORLD CAN'T BE TAKEN LIGHTLY!

I COULD NOT SAVE HER.

SHE'S *DEAD*, KING! *FATE* HAS CHOSEN HER LOT.

WHAT OF *ME*, KING? WOULD YOU PUSH ASIDE *FATE* AND CHOOSE MY LOT?

SHALL I BE *MURDERED* BY *YOU* FOR ATTEMPTING TO SAVE HER LIFE? OR PERHAPS BECAUSE I HAVE THIS LILIN PRESENCE WITHIN ME THAT I DID NOT *ASK* FOR?!

GAKK!

THEIR WAY OF LIFE IS NOT AS *CIVILIZED* AS OURS, SO WE BRAND THEM ALL *WICKED* AND *EVIL!*

I HAVE SEEN *BOTH* SIDES OF THIS *BATTLE!* MANY OF THE *LILIN* WISH ONLY TO RECLAIM THAT WHICH WAS *THEIRS* MILLENNIA AGO.

THEY HAVE THEIR *OWN* LOYALTIES WITH *FAR* LESS IN-FIGHTING THAN WE DO!

I DON'T *BLAME* YOU FOR MISTRUSTING ME!

I DON'T *COMPLETELY* TRUST *MYSELF*.

BUT I'M IN THIS TO *SAVE* LIVES, KING!

THE *FALLEN* ARE RELATED TO THE *BLOOD*, NOT THE *LILIN*, SO THERE WILL *BE* NO CONFUSION REGARDLESS OF THIS ACCURSED LILIN PRESENCE WITHIN MY SUBCONSCIOUSNESS.

YOU CAN STEP OFF YOUR SOAPBOX NOW, MORBIUS.

I GUESS I LOST SIGHT OF WHAT'S *LEFT* OF REALITY, STARTED *ONLY* SEEING IN *BLACK* AND *WHITE*.

THERE ARE LILIN IN SHADES OF *GRAY*, JUST LIKE US. I'M *NOT* LILIN AND *WELCOME* THE CHANCE TO PROVE MY LOYALTY TO THE *HUMAN* RACE.

THAT *IS* WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING TO PRESERVE. BUT *NOT* AT THE EXPENSE OF INNOCENTS, NO MATTER *WHAT* THEIR BREEDING.

I'M SORRY. LET'S FIND THIS *RAYDAR* TOGETHER.

WE ARE *NOT* THE MURDEROUS VILLAINS THAT ZARATHOS AND HIS FOLLOWERS APPEAR TO BE.

YOU SHOULD HAVE HAD THE *DECENCY* TO VOICE YOUR CONCERNS INSTEAD OF SNEAKING AROUND.

END.

A child born of no man
And of a woman marked by sin;
Daughter becomes mother;
Then will the dark return begin!
--from the Malachy Prophecy, as translated from the Darkhold

A TALE OF THE
DARKHOLD
Pages from the Book of Sins

White Letter

FOR MONTHS NOW, VICKI MONTESI HAS FOUGHT THE EVILS SPAWNED BY MYSTERIOUS BLACK LETTERS--

--BLACK LETTERS THAT EACH CONTAIN PAGES OF THE DARKHOLD, THE ULTIMATE BOOK OF BLACK MAGIC.

NOW, RETURNING TO THE RUINS OF DR. STEPHEN STRANGE'S MANSION IN THE MIDST OF THE SEIGE OF DARKNESS...

...SHE'S ACCIDENTALLY FOUND A MUCH MORE ORDINARY LETTER...

...THE LAST LETTER WRITTEN BY VICKI'S FRIEND, PROF. LOUISE HASTINGS, BEFORE SHE DIED...

...A LETTER TO DR. STRANGE THAT HE NEVER SAW...

...A LETTER VICKI HAS JUST OPENED AND READ TO HER EVERLASTING REGRET.

FOR SHE FINALLY KNOWS THE TRUE EVIL OF THE DARKHOLD...

...AND WHO'S REALLY DOING THE SPAWNING.

VICKI! DON'T DO IT!!

BAM BAM BAM BAM

C'MON, VICKI, TALK TO ME!

SAM BUCHANAN, YOU IDIOT! HOW COULD YOU LET HER GET HOLD OF YOUR GUN?!

YOU KNEW SHE WAS UPSET BY SOMETHING IN LOUISE'S LETTER...

BLAST IT, LOUISE, WHAT COULD YOU HAVE WRITTEN?

VICKI!!

Dear Stephen, I've made a terrible discovery...

Vicki's "father", Vittorio Montesi, is sterile and always has been!

I called Vittorio and confronted him... and he finally confessed his dark secret...

He used a spell of fertility from the Darkhold to sire Vicki!

The poor fool... in his desperation for an heir to save the world from the Darkhold, he may have doomed us all.

Because the seed that spell planted in his wife's womb wasn't Vittorio's, but Chthon's!

..and the unwitting source of the Darkhold's recent surge in power.

KLIK

I fear that as long as that sweet girls lives, the Darkhold will be more powerful than ever!

BLAM

VICKI?

BKASH

GOT TO GET IN THERE, BEFORE--

Vicki is the daughter of the Darkhold's demonic author...

NO!

UUUUNNNH...!

VICKI?

COULDN'T DO IT... GOD FORGIVE ME...

...I THREW OFF MY *AIM* AT THE LAST MINUTE.

BUT *WHY*, VICKI? WHY WOULD YOU *WANT* TO DO IT?

DON'T YOU SEE, SAM? THE *GATEWAY* TO CHTHON'S DIMENSION THAT'S BEEN POWERING THE DARKHOLD PAGES-- --IT'S *ME*.

ALL THE DARKHOLD *HORRORS* WE'VE FOUGHT... I'VE BEEN THE *CAUSE* ALL ALONG AND I DIDN'T EVEN *KNOW* IT.

AND THE *AWFUL* PART IS...

...NONE OF THAT MATTERS.

EVERYTHING WE'VE FOUGHT SO FAR WAS A *WARM-UP*... AN INSIGNIFICANT *SIDE EFFECT*.

MY WHOLE EXISTENCE IS FOR *ONE* REASON... PART OF A PLAN SO *DIABOLICAL*, WHO COULD SUSPECT?

VICKI, YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE.

NO? THEN LET ME MAKE IT *CRYSTAL CLEAR*--

--I'M *PREGNANT*.

PREGNANT?!? BUT I THOUGHT--

SAM I'VE NEVER... EVER!

THEN HOW COULD YOU BE HAVING A BABY?!?

A BABY? WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT A BABY?

THIS... THING INSIDE ME-- IT'S--

--IT'S

--IT'S CHTHON!

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE MALACHY PROPHECY!

I'M MARKED BY "SIN", IN THAT THE DARKHOLD, THE BOOK OF SINS, WAS USED TO CONCEIVE ME.

NOW I, THE DAUGHTER OF CHTHON, BECOME THE MOTHER OF CHTHON.

THAT WAS CHTHON'S PLAN ALL ALONG. THAT'S WHY I EXIST...

...TO BRING CHTHON HOME TO EARTH, THINK OF WHAT THAT WORLD WOULD BE LIKE!

IT'D BE THE APOCALYPSE, BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE.

YOU'VE GOT TO BE STRONGER THAN ME, SAM. I'M BEGGING YOU-- PLEASE--

--KILL ME.

I--I--

--I CAN'T!

BLAST IT, VICKI, THIS IS *NONSENSE!* I DON'T BELIEVE A *WORD* OF IT--NEVER HAVE!

LISTEN TO YOURSELF! FATHERLESS BIRTH, "*MALARKEY PROPHECIES*"--

SKRASH

DO YOU BELIEVE *NOW*, SAM?

THE *N'GARAI!!*

CHTHON'S *MURDEROUS SPAWN*, COME TO TAKE ME AWAY!

BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE *INVISIBLE* TO THESE THINGS!

I'VE *NEVER* BEEN INVISIBLE TO THEM. THEY *IGNORED* ME BEFORE--*

--BECAUSE AS FAR AS THEY'RE CONCERNED, I'M *ONE OF THEM!*

BLAM BLAM BLAM

WHUMP

*IN DARKHOLD #4. --Richard

THESE THINGS ARE NEARLY *IMPOSSIBLE* TO STOP...

NOW THAT I'M PREGNANT WITH THEIR *LORD AND MASTER*, THEY WANT TO BRING ME INTO THE *FOLD!*

BCHOW BCHOW BCHOW

... BUT MAYBE I CAN SLOW THEM DOWN!

THE MANSION'S HANGING TOGETHER BY A *THREAD* AS IT IS! IF I CAN *WEAKEN* A KEY SUPPORT--

KRAAAK

MORE OF THEM!
SHEESH! THEY'RE LIKE ROACHES!
THE ONES TRAPPED IN THE RUBBLE ARE BREAKING FREE!
UP THE STAIRS! MOVE!
THE STAIRS ARE NARROW ENOUGH THAT ONLY A FEW CAN PASS AT A TIME. IT'LL BUY US A FEW MOMENTS--
--TO BARRICADE OURSELVES UP HERE.
SAM-- IT'S ME THEY WANT, NOT YOU. SAVE YOURSELF-- LET THEM HAVE ME!
VICKI, HAVEN'T YOU LEARNED ANYTHING ABOUT ME IN ALL THIS TIME?
I'M STUBBORN! I'M A LUMMOX--
--I'M YOUR BODYGUARD.
I'M YOUR FRIEND.

AND PART OF ME WILL ALWAYS LOVE--

--UUUNNGH!

SAM!

KRAASH

NO... OH, NO!

Oh, Stephen, I should have seen this coming from the beginning. The signs were all there.

...Vittorio always resented Vicki, not because she was born a girl or rejected his teachings...

...Not even because of her unconventional love life...

...but because, deep down inside, he knew she wasn't really his daughter.

So what happens when her real "family" comes to claim her?

WHO--?!? SOMEONE GRABBING ME FROM BEHIND-- PULLING ME THROUGH A MYSTIC PORTAL TO SAFETY!

Please, Stephen, if anyone can help Vicki, it's you!

WOULD YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT THE DEVIL IS GOING ON?

DR. STRANGE!

CONTINUES IN DR. STRANGE #61.

"We have your sign," said Thorvin. He held out a pendant on a silver chain. Shef looked at it curiously: a shaft, with five rungs sticking out from it on alternate sides.

"What is it?"

"It is a *kraki,*" replied Thorvin. "A pole-ladder. It is the sign of Rig."

"I have never heard the name of that god. What can you tell me about him that should make me wear his sign?"

"He is the god of climbers. Of wanderers. He is mighty not through himself but through his children. He is the father of Thrall, of Carl, of Jarl. And of others."

"You have to do it one rung at a time," replied Thorvin.

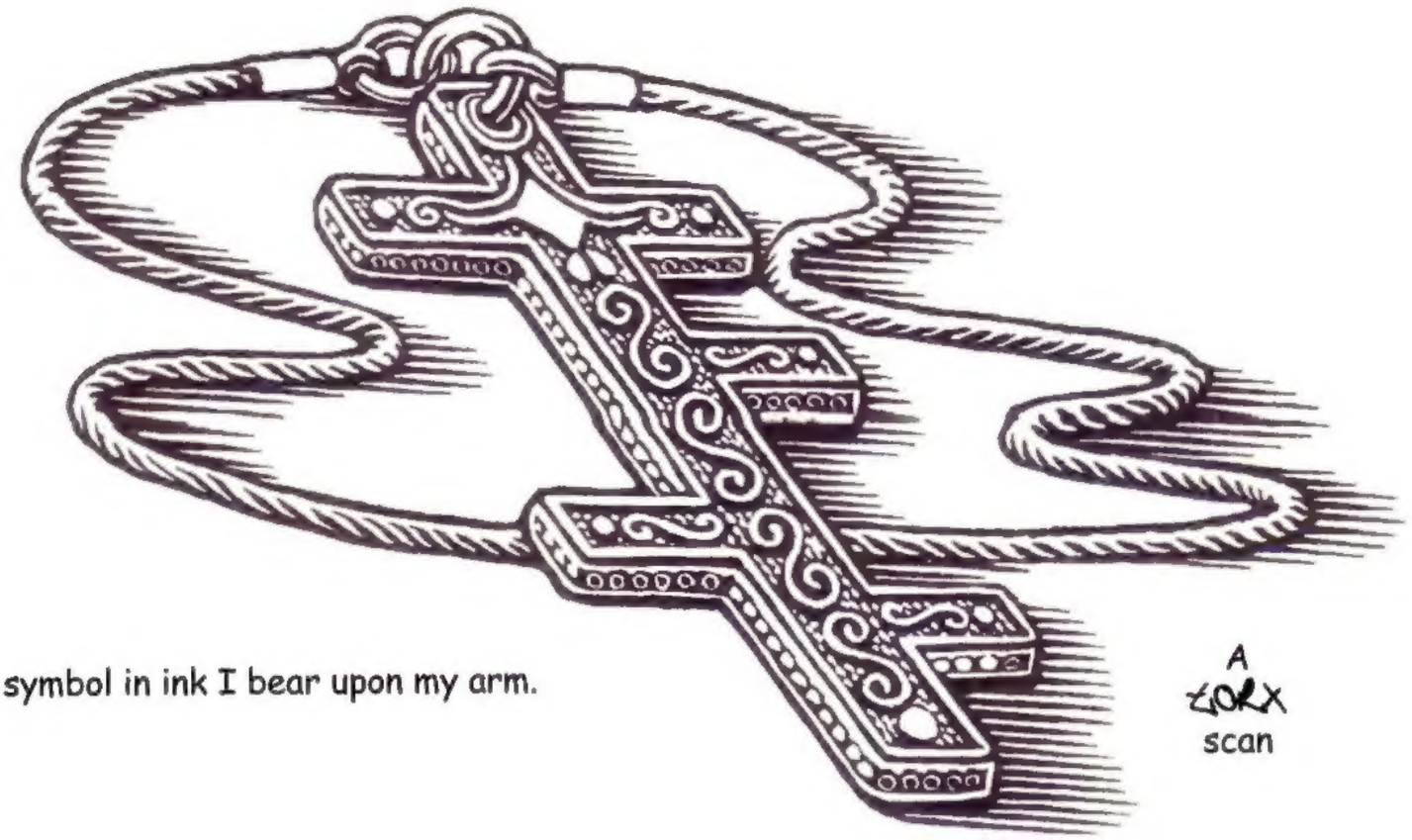
"Hard to climb, difficult to balance, to reach the top. But at the top there are two rungs to grasp on to. One opposite the other. It could almost be a cross."

Thorvin frowned. "Rig and his sign were known in the ages before there ever was a cross. It is not a sign of death. No. It is one of reaching higher, of living better."

Shef smiled, the first time he had done that for many days. "I like your sign, Thorvin," he said. "I will wear it." He slipped the Wayman's pendant round his neck, turned and looked at the misted sea.

Some knot, some pain within him was released, fled.

For the first time in his entire life he felt at peace.



The symbol in ink I bear upon my arm.

A
ZORX
scan